

## After Hours by pterafractal

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**Summary:**

A recently out Will Byers begins his freshman year at Indiana University, with his childhood best friend (and roommate) Mike Wheeler. Between learning to navigate the campus and keep his head above water academically, Will struggles to reconcile changes in his relationship with Mike.

## After Hours

### Author's Note:

This story epitomizes the "fluff & smut" tag (hopefully that's a good thing?), with some hints of angst here and there. If you're not in the market for sexually explicit content, read no further. Otherwise, I hope you enjoy. Thanks for reading.

Will traced his fingers along the soft shearling of the jacket's collar. He pressed his cheek to it, imagining Mike inside. Mike had never smelled 'boyish' to Will. He'd always just smelled like... Mike. Like something between clean laundry and the scent in the air right before it began to snow.

"Hey," Mike said softly, making Will jump. "What're you doing in the coat closet?"

"Nothing," Will said quickly, releasing the hem of Mike's jacket and turning around with a small, uncertain smile.

"Well, I think we're all set. Car's packed, checklist... Checked. You ready?" Mike capped this question off with a winning smile, and Will blinked several times before nodding, unable to form a coherent response.

They were leaving Hawkins today. Right now, in fact. It was all meticulously planned over the course of many months—years, even—but now it was starting feel rushed. Like some hackneyed scheme to run away from home he'd come up with when he was 9 years old.

Standing in the Wheeler family foyer Will felt woefully unprepared for what he'd signed himself up for. He and Mike had both been accepted to Indiana University, albeit in wildly different programs, and would be rooming together on the Bloomington campus. A tiny, 130 square foot space, which was definitely destined to feel even smaller since Will came out as gay to his friends and family in a tear-filled confessional the previous Thanksgiving.

Mike had been uncharacteristically quiet when the whole thing went down. There was a marked difference in the way Mike treated him for a few weeks afterward—just a little less talkative, a slight dip in one-on-one activities. Finally, while managing not to cry, Will had confronted Mike, asking him in an impossibly small voice, “do you hate me now?”

Mike’s reaction was one of disbelief.

“How... Will, I could never hate you. Ever. You’re my best friend. I’m sorry if I... If I’ve been different. I know it shouldn’t make a difference but I’m still adjusting, I guess.” He’d taken Will’s hand in his own and offered him that same smile, cast in a reassuring light. Will had nodded along, glassy eyed, and in time, things had gotten better.

Will had been terrified his confession would ruin their college plans, but Mike seemed to have never given it a second thought. He knew the Wheelers must be more reticent, based on some terse conversations with Karen. Ted was more difficult to read.

“Thanks for driving, by the way,” Will said, genuinely grateful, turning from the passenger window to look over at Mike. Something about being behind the wheel made him anxious. Mike nodded, assuring him it was no big deal.

Hawkins was only a few hours drive from Bloomington, but that first trip felt like forever. The anticipation of everything to come roiled in Will’s stomach as he stared out the window. He jumped when Mike broke the silence with a question.

“You nervous?” Mike asked, eyes still on the road. “I mean, I definitely am.”

“Yeah,” Will said softly. Then, without looking at Mike, he added: “we’re okay, right?”

Mike let out a little huff of air. “We’re good, Will, really. I’m sure we’ll find plenty of stuff to fight about when we’re roommates, but it won’t be about that. I promise.”

"You think we'll fight?" Will wondered aloud. Mike just laughed.

"Not about anything important."

"Just as long as you don't stay up all night 'practicing' guitar."

"Very funny. All good artists are unappreciated in their time."

"I don't think that's true about musicians..." Will mused, holding his bottom lip between his thumb and forefinger and trying not to smile. Mike made a sound of mock hurt and reached out to pinch Will's side, who squirmed away. "Mike! Not while you're driving."

"We're fine, we're fine," Mike said with a smile in his voice. Will felt oddly soothed.

Mike had been right about their fighting—bickering, whatever you wanted to call it. It was mostly just little things, like who was going to empty the trash when it was full and who kept exploding food in the microwave. After a few weeks had passed and they'd settled in more or less, things got a bit more complicated for Will when Mike started drinking.

Mike had never really fallen in with a partying crowd in high school. He spent most of his Friday nights with Will, who eschewed mind altering chemicals for the most part. He'd had enough mind altering for a lifetime.

You couldn't really call the crowd Mike was hanging out with now "party animals". They were basically a fraternity that was dominated by nerds. But ISU's Greek life was far from tame, regardless of whose letters were on your pledge pin. On the weekends booze flowed freely and base lines thudded on Frat Row until well into the early morning.

Mike found these parties decompressing, so he claimed, and when Friday rolled around, he'd usually head off for an evening of controlled chaos. As fall began to descend upon the campus in earnest, he and Will settled into a routine. Friday evenings consisted of Will reading and enjoying some time to himself, with Mike arriving home some time later, a little drunk and happy to report back to Will on all the crazy things he'd seen while he was out.

Mike was a happy, cuddly drunk—this surprised Will, given his surly, sulky tendencies. When he got back to the dorm room on Fridays he'd usually scoop Will up in a hug, despite his protests that he smelled like licorice and cigarettes. On Saturdays they'd sleep in and sometimes a sheepish Mike would take Will out for a belated breakfast as a running apology for being obnoxious the night before.

Will didn't mind. He didn't mind the late nights, he didn't mind the stale smell of beer, and he definitely didn't mind the way Mike looked at him across the formica table at the diner where they drank coffee and dunked toast into the runny yolks of sunny side up eggs.

Will was lying on his back one Friday evening, contemplating this look. Mike's eyes at half-mast, his wild hair, the stubble on his cheeks, the pinkness of his lips, the way the muscles moved in his jaw, the way he sipped from the oversized coffee mug, the way his long fingers held the cutlery, the way his shirt shifted around the tops of shoulders.

Will covered his eyes with one hand and groaned softly. He imagined those same lips on his cheek, his jaw, his neck. He imagined his hands on those shoulders, his fingers digging into the firm flesh. He imagined Mike's long fingers touching his chest, his stomach, his waist. He let out a soft hiss as he unbuttoned the fly of his jeans, reaching into his briefs.

He didn't usually allow himself the indulgence of thinking about Mike like this. But he'd had a long week. The paper he'd turned in for his English literature course had gotten less than stellar marks, even though he'd poured all of his anxiety about performing at a collegiate level into its composition.

Pulling his growing erection out of his underwear, he imagined Mike's lips on his own. He imagined Mike's hands sliding under his shirt, up his bare back. He stroked himself until he was fully erect, then paused. Just as he was about to reach for the lotion he'd squirreled away behind the bed, he heard a key enter the lock.

"Shit, shit, shit," Will swore under his breath, stuffing his cock back into his jeans and forcing the zipper shut. He sat up and tried to look casual, glancing around for something to do. He picked up a

discarded paperback book and cracked it open.

“Hey,” Mike said with a smile, pushing his hair out of his eyes. He looked nice in a rumpled flannel shirt and jeans.

“Hey, yourself,” Will said quickly, a little more breathlessly than he’d anticipated. Mike gave him a second glance.

“You okay? Your face is kind of flushed.”

“What? Yeah, I mean. I’m fine.”

“Your, um...” Mike trailed off, color rising in his own cheeks. Will glanced down and noticed the outline of his erection still fairly obvious through his jeans.

“Sorry, God, I was—“

“No, it’s fine, I mean, you’re fine. I didn’t—I don’t mean to... I mean you should feel free to—“

“No, this is weird, really—“

“I mean where else are we going to—“

“Mike—“

“I do it when you’re in Statistics, usually—“

“Mike!” They were silent for a few beats as Mike crossed the room and sat on his bed, while simultaneously unable to stop staring in the direction of Will’s groin. Will contemplated what would be involved in the Upside Down swallowing him up right at this very moment.

“Do you ever...” Mike began, uncertainly. “Think about me? You know. When you...” Mike trailed off, putting his hands behind his head and exhaling through his nose.

Will stared at him in disbelief, feeling simultaneously caught out and indignant.

“Are you asking me if I think about you when I masturbate?”

“Well, when you put it that way, it sounds... Weirder.”

“That is what you were asking though, right?”

Mike shrugged and laughed, which came out as more of a drunken giggle. “I don’t know. I guess.” He hopped to his feet from the bed, unsteady for a moment before pulling off his flannel and undershirt. Will set his jaw as he tried not to watch Mike strip down, laser-focused on his paperback.

When he chanced a glance in Mike’s direction, he caught a glimpse of his very pale ass as he pulled on a pair of basketball shorts. God, he’s not wearing any underwear, Will thought, groaning internally.

“Wanna watch a movie?” Mike asked, apropos of nothing, sliding a plastic tub of VHS tapes out from under his bed.

“Uh, sure,” Will said softly, closing his book and setting it on the nightstand. He cautiously crossed the room and sat on Mike’s bed spread, peering down at the rows of sci-fi and comedy classics. Will cocked his head to the side, reaching down to pull out a copy of *Pretty in Pink*. “Yours?” he asked, genuinely curious.

“Uh, must’ve been Nance’s,” Mike said with a small, sheepish smile. Will nodded, skeptical.

They settled on *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*, and Mike took his usual spot at the head of the bed, patting the space next to him when Will hesitated. He slid to the top of the bed with a small sigh.

The movie was good—funnier than Will had remembered. But Matthew Broderick’s dark unruly hair and impish expression was like a constant reminder of Mike and his proximity. Mike who, despite smelling like rum and cigarettes, was still impossibly pleasant to be around. Mike, absentmindedly stroking Will’s thigh.

When the movie ended, Mike turned to Will and smiled blearily. “Want to watch another or go to sleep?”

“Um,” Will began, but didn’t elaborate. Mike had slid his hand between them and was brushing his knuckles gently against Will’s. He leaned forward slightly.

“Yeah?” Mike asked, getting increasingly near to Will’s left ear until his cheek pressed against the side of his jaw and he placed a featherlight kiss on Will’s earlobe.

Internally, Will’s mind was churning in absolute overdrive. He’d imagined some five hundred iterations of this exact scenario in the past. Mike initiating—cuddles, kisses, with increasing escalation. But in the moment, the actual moment, he was frozen.

“Mike,” he said, weakly, at last. He could feel the muscles in Mike’s face shift into a soft smile against his neck.

“This okay?” Mike whispered.

“Um,” Will said again, lamely. He opted for a gentle nod, unable to find the words. Mike pressed another kiss to the place where his jaw met his neck. Will’s eyes fluttered shut. He could smell the alcohol seeping out of Mike’s pores and it made him feel dizzy.

Mike pulled back and looked Will in the eyes, pushing a stray hair behind his ear. He moved forward, kissing the corner of Will’s lips awkwardly. Will searched his face before crashing their lips together, ignoring Mike’s small noise of surprise.

They kissed for an indeterminable amount of time, sloppy and unsure. It wasn’t perfect, but it shot through Will’s body like a jolt of electricity. He could feel his cock begin to react, growing harder by the second.

“I want—um, can I touch you?” Mike asked, fingers hesitating just above the waistband of Will’s jeans.

“Yes,” Will breathed, before he’d given himself much chance to think it over. Mike slipped his hand inside, cupping Will through his briefs in a way that made him feel like he was going to pass out.

“Can I—“ Will began, when Mike nodded rapidly, taking Will’s hand and pressing it against his own erection. Will sucked in air through his nose at the touch, the heat and the pulse of it evident even through the fabric of his shorts.

Mike swallowed a small sound and leaned forward, capturing Will’s



lips again. Will resisted the urge to whimper into the kiss, which was better than the first—softer, more open. Mike deepened the kiss, his free hand coming to rest on the small of Will's back, pulling him closer.

Will pushed his hand deeper inside Mike's shorts, sliding them off his hips as he did so. He touched him, skin to skin for the first time. He could scarcely believe how hot to the touch he was, how hard. His thumb slid across Mike's head, catching a bead of moisture on the tip. He swirled it around, hesitating when Mike hissed.

"Sorry—ah—it's just sensitive," Mike choked out. Mike reached out and reciprocated Will's gesture, pushing down his briefs and wrapping his fingers around Will's cock.

"Um," Mike began, uncertain suddenly. "How do you like to touch yourself?"

"T-tightly, like this," Will reached down with his free hand and covered Mike's, making his grip firmer. "And I like to touch the underside of the head, like this," he whispered, shifting Mike's thumb so it touched the sensitive skin below the head of his cock, making him shiver. Mike attempted to mimic Will's instruction.

"That feel good?" he whispered. Will nodded rapidly and Mike smiled, his eyes shining in the low light.

"W-what about you?" Will asked, struggling to stay focused as Mike stroked him.

"I like it slow," Mike said softly, "and use your fingers, like this." He adjusted Will's position slightly and Will felt him twitch as he did.

"That's good, that's good," Mike murmured, closing his eyes. "I was, uh, I've been kinda hard since we started the movie," Mike said, slightly sheepish. "So—ahh—I'm probably not gonna last long."

"Let's take turns then," Will whispered, feeling suddenly bolder as he gently removed Mike's hand from his cock and slid closer. Mike turned his head to the side and caught Will's lips in a warm, soft kiss. Will stroked him as instructed, watching as precome gathered on the

head of his cock. Will squirmed closer until he realized he was pressing his erection into Mike's side.

"Sorry, I'm poking you," he said with a nervous little laugh.

"I like it," Mike whispered back. "I like, uh, knowing I got you hard." Will bit his lip and pressed his cheek against Mike's bare shoulder, stroking him more quickly.

"Ahh—getting close," Mike gritted out, tipping his head back. He bucked his hips forward, his grip tightening on the blanket beneath them. He swore as he came on his stomach. Will continued to stroke him until Mike reached up and covered his hand with his own, breathing heavily.

"Your turn," Mike said with a grin, surprising Will when he got up onto his knees, hovering over him. He reached down and took Will in his hand again, propping himself up with the other.

A trickle of precome had appeared on the head of Will's cock while he'd watched Mike come, transfixed. He held his breath for a few seconds, trying to stay calm. His enduring crush on Mike had prepared him for many things, but the sensation of Mike stroking his cock while looking down at him with a hungry intensity, was not one of them.

"Feeling good?" Mike asked softly.

"Yeah," Will said breathlessly. "I'm... I'm not going to last very long..." He shifted beneath Mike, resisting the urge to thrust into his hand.

"That's okay. I want you to come for me," Mike said in a voice just above a whisper, locking his eyes with Will's.

"Fuck, Mike," Will threw his head back and shifted, instinctively pushing his shirt up his stomach as he got closer to the edge. Mike leaned forward and covered Will's lips with his own, their tongues sliding together. Will came in short bursts, warm release coating his stomach as Mike continued to stroke him.

At last Will fell back, breathing heavily, damp with sweat. Mike

grabbed his discarded undershirt and wiped them both off before he collapsed on his back next to Will.

“Wow,” Mike breathed out. Will hesitated.

“Good or bad?”

“Amazing,” Mike said before muffling a yawn. “You?”

“Yeah, it was really, um. Good.”

Mike smiled over at him and he shivered involuntarily.

“Maybe we should have, like, rules,” Will said suddenly, after a few moments of silence had passed them by.

“Rules?” Mike asked.

“Yeah, for... this stuff.” Will gestured between them. Mike looked thoughtful for a moment before propping himself up on one elbow. “I mean, if we want to keep doing it, I guess.”

“What’d you have in mind?”

“Um, it stays in here, for example,” Will offered.

“The dorms?”

“Yeah. And, I don’t know—what’s important to you?”

Mike took a deep breath and sighed. He was sobering up and, Will imagined, coming to grips with what they’d done. Will tensed as he watched Mike lost in thought.

“I mean, I guess I just want to make sure I don’t hurt you or our friendship. That’s what’s most important to me,” Mike said, earnestly. He leaned forward and pressed a little kiss to Will’s shoulder.

“That’s fair. I, uh, appreciate that,” Will said quietly.

“We’ll just take it easy. I mean, we already tell each other everything... Right?” Mike asked, his expression soft and open.

“Yeah,” Will said, in a voice that was more air than sound. Mike seemed satisfied with this response, rolling on to his back for a moment before sitting up.

“I’m gonna go wash up.” He got to his feet, a bit unsteadily, and grabbed his basket of toiletries. “You coming?”

“Uh, yeah.” Will and Mike’s typical evening routine had consisted of standing side by side at the sinks in the washroom for several weeks now, but something about it felt newly intimate in the wake of their hookup (or whatever it was).

But when their eyes met in the mirror, Mike just smiled at him the way he always had.

The next week went by like a daydream. Will did his best to focus in class, but he found himself thinking about Mike most of the time.

He restricted his most embarrassing lines of thought to the privacy of the dorm room or the shower stall. Things like imagining the soft pinkness of Mike’s lips, the blushing head of his cock, the stocky girth of his shaft. Thoughts of the latter made him so hard so fast the first time it happened he got a little head rush.

Mike’s behavior didn’t change much, he was friendly as ever, gently teasing as ever. Sometimes, though, when Will caught his eye he’d give me a little wink that made his heart flutter. He wasn’t sure if anything would happen again any time soon, until Thursday morning when Mike asked him what he was doing Friday night.

“Nothing,” Will had replied, honestly. “But you’ll be here though, right?” Mike asked, an edge of anxiety in his voice.

“Y-yeah. Yes. I’ll be here.”

Mike smiled. “Okay, good.”

The next twenty four hours dragged along. When Will got home Friday evening Mike had already gone out, so he settled in to wait. He felt a little pitiful, patiently attending their empty dorm room in the hopes that Mike would come home soon and, well... He tried not to think about it took much, not wanting to get worked up in case

nothing actually happened.

Will had accidentally dozed off without realizing it, until the sound of Mike's key in the lock woke him. He perked up and pretended to be reading the book that lie discarded beside him, doing his best to not look like he'd fallen asleep waiting.

"Hey," Mike said as soon as he stepped inside, his face breaking open into a grin.

"Hey," Will replied with a shy smile. He set his book down and crossed the room to where Mike was standing confidently, only to hesitate when they were close enough to touch.

Mike made the first move, leaning down to kiss him. It was just a chaste kiss, their closed lips pressing together softly, but Will could tell Mike was holding back.

"I've been thinking about you," Mike blurted out. "All night." He leaned down for another kiss, and Will tentatively wrapped his arms around his neck.

"Yeah?" Will asked, with mostly genuine disbelief.

"Yeah. I just... I really wanted to kiss you."

"And?" Will pressed, smiling and biting his lip.

"And, um, well..." Mike pushed his hips forward, grinding against Will as he kissed him.

"You're hard..." Will murmured into his mouth, surprised. The sensation of Mike's erection pressed against him and the fact that Mike had been erect the moment he walked in the door, thinking about him, was almost more than Will could handle.

Will pushed himself up and kissed Mike again, this time opening his mouth and encouraging Mike inside. They embraced for several moments like this—Will could feel the warmth pooling in his abdomen as he got hard, Mike's erection still pressing against his hip.

When they came up for air, Mike smiled and asked, breathlessly, "get

undressed?" Will nodded and they each made quick work of their clothes, stripping down to their underwear. Will shivered when he saw the outline of Mike's cock in the tent of his boxers.

Confidently, Will lead Mike to his bed, falling back onto it and taking Mike with him. They laughed and tussled, Mike capturing Will in a kiss once or twice, pressing him into the mattress.

Mike sat up on his knees, pushing his hair out of his eyes. He pulled Will's underwear down a bit further, exposing him. His cock fell back onto his stomach, flush and pink and painfully erect.

"Um," Mike began, uncertainly, his fingers in the hollow of Will's hip. "Can I blow you?"

"What?" Will asked breathlessly, before he'd had a chance process what Mike was saying. "I mean," he amended, "you want to... Do that?"

"Yeah," Mike said without hesitating, licking his lips. Will felt his breathing speed up, the heat in his face rise.

"O-okay. I'd... That would be good, thanks." They both exchanged a look and laughed. Will was about to say something else when Mike leaned forward abruptly and pressed a trail of kisses along his stomach before running his tongue along the length of him. Will's elbows dropped out from beneath him and he fell back onto his shoulders with a soft moan.

Mike took his time working his way up to taking Will in his mouth, kissing and licking and stroking until Will was afraid he'd come the second Mike actually started to go down on him. When Mike finally took him in one hand and took his head into his mouth, Will made a pitiful sound and pulled him off, gently tugging his hair.

"I'm really close already," he said softly, mildly embarrassed. Mike just smiled.

"That's okay. I want to, um. Taste you." Will gripped the bedsheets involuntarily.

"You want me to..."

“Yeah,” Mike said in a voice just above a whisper. He took Will in his mouth again and started a slow rhythm, bobbing up and down. Will kept one hand in Mike’s hair and one behind his head, gripping his pillow. Will staved off orgasm for as long as he could, but every time he opened one eye to glance down at Mike he could feel the muscles in his abdomen tighten like a rubber band that was about to snap.

“Mike—“ Will managed to choke out before bucking his hips twice and losing himself in a crushing wave of pleasure and release. He distantly heard Mike cough softly before shifting to the top of the bed and kissing Will’s neck. Will lie completely still, breathing heavily and contemplating the whole body, jelly-like sensation he was left with.

He could feel Mike’s erection against his thigh, his boxers damp with sweat and arousal. He pushed through his own post-orgasmic malaise and rolled over onto his side, pulling down Mike’s boxers and exposing him, flushed and leaking already. Their lips met and he could taste a strange mixture of himself and Mike and the salt of their sweat. He stroked Mike slowly, holding him tightly, listening to him swallow moans and other small sounds.

“Will,” Mike whispered in a voice that made his stomach flip. He felt Mike grow stiff, his body shuddering as he came on his abdomen with a low sound, pushing into Will’s hand as he rode out his orgasm. He fell onto his back when Will released him, breathing heavily. He reached out and slid an arm under Will, pulling him close.

They lie still for several minutes until their breathing had slowed and become more even. Anxiety began to creep up at the back of Will’s mind, worried once again that every moment Mike’s liver endeavored to filter the alcohol out of his system was another step towards resuming their normal roommate lifestyle.

“Hey, what do you think the caloric content of, like, stuff is?” Mike murmured into the top of his head.

“Stuff?”

“You know, like...” Mike made a gesture like flicking water from his fingers and Will laughed.

“Come?”

Mike giggled. “Yeah.”

“I have no idea,” Will said, honestly.

“They didn’t teach you that in life sciences?”

Will snorted. “Hmm, maybe we haven’t gotten to that lecture yet.”

“Well, I like the way yours tastes,” Mike said, softer this time.

Will could feel himself flush in the dark, the heat blooming across his face and neck. “Thank you. I’ll, um, have to try yours some time.”

Mike made a pleased little sound and kissed the top of Will’s head. “But,” he amended, “what I was trying to say earlier is, actually, I’m still hungry.”

“Uh—“ Will began, his heart rate picking up.

“For real food this time, I mean. Sorry, I’m still kind of drunk.”

“S’okay. You, uh, want to go get something to eat?”

“Yeah, let’s walk to that all night place. I want like... Breakfast food. Pancakes!”

Will smiled. “Yeah, that sounds nice. I could go for a snack.” Mike tipped his head down and gave Will a quick kiss. When he pulled back Will struggled to hide his surprised expression.

“Sorry,” Mike said quickly.

“No, it’s okay, I like it. You can kiss me. You can kiss me, uh, any time,” Will trailed off, looking up into Mike’s eyes. He smiled, a slow and easy sort of expression, before leaning down and catching Will’s lips in his own again. Will responded this time, opening his mouth slightly, running his hands up into Mike’s hair.

They kissed lazily for several minutes, until Mike’s stomach growled loudly and they broke apart, laughing.



“Can I take you to dinner—er, whatever meal this is?” Mike asked, drawing a circle in Will’s palm with the tip of his thumb.

“Yeah, yeah, definitely. That would be nice. Um, thank you.”

“Cool,” Mike said, his voice soft.

The trip to the diner was not unlike their usual Saturday morning breakfasts, except Mike was still more or less drunk—and not even trying to mask the way he was looking at Will. Across the table, Will tore pieces of soft pancake from his plate, popping them into his mouth in a sort of trance.

Every so often he’d break eye contact with Mike and glance around the restaurant at all the bleary-eyed faces illuminated by the gently humming fluorescent lights. He wondered dimly if they were being too obvious, if their appearances were too glaringly disheveled, or if they smelled like sex. But whenever the doubts would begin to push through, Mike would say or do something that made everything else feel far away.

When Monday rolled around, Will’s feelings of unease had returned. He felt distracted as he went from class to class, a sort of nagging sensation at the back of his mind like some forgotten chore.

As things picked up and midterms grew closer, time seemed to pass more quickly. At home the following Friday Will nodded off while working and had a dream where he was taking a timed examination. But whenever he glanced up at the clock its hands were moving irregularly—too slowly, too quickly, the wrong direction, until at last everything melted from the clock’s face, the hands and numbers dripping to the floor.

Will was woken from his dream by the digital chirp of the dorm phone. He grabbed it off its cradle.

“Hello?”

“Hey!” Mike’s voice crackled to life on the other end of the line. The background noise was intense, despite Mike clearly cupping his hand over the receiver.

“Are you okay?” Will asked instinctively. He glanced at the clock near his bed, which showed just after midnight.

“Yeah, yeah, I mean. I’m just a little drunk, sorry. But I was wondering, shit, sorry, Will, I was wondering could you come pick me up? I can’t find the guys I came with.”

Will grimaced but said, “Sure, yeah. No problem. Um, where are you?”

“I’m somewhere on Frat Row. I’ll go and sit outside?”

“Yeah, okay, that sounds good. I’ll be there soon.”

Will hung up and swallowed tightly. He hated driving at night, but at least the traffic on Fraternity Row was slow. Incredibly so on a Friday night. He grabbed the keys from Mike’s desk and ignored the flush on his neck when he saw the bottle of lotion rolling around inside the partially open drawer.

It didn’t take long to find Mike. He was sitting and chatting with some very drunk guy on the wet grass, laughing, his cheeks faintly pink. Mike’s face lit up when he saw Will and sent a little jolt of pleasure down into his gut.

“Hey!” he beamed excitedly, as though he hadn’t just seen Will a few hours prior. “Thanks for coming for me.” He leaned into the open driver’s side window in a way that made Will terrified and exhilarated, their faces only inches apart.

“Y-you’re welcome.”

Mike smiled back and quickly rounded the car and hopped into the passenger’s seat.

The drive back was mostly silent. Every so often Will glanced over and Mike was looking back at him in this warm, affectionate way that he’d become intimately familiar with. When he was drunk, Mike was even more effusive than normal.

When they pulled into the relative darkness of the dorm’s parking garage, Mike reached over and tentatively covered Will’s hand on the

gear shift.

“Thanks for the ride,” he said softly, his eyes shining.

“No problem,” Will said in a voice just above a whisper. He tipped his head back against the headrest and turned toward Mike, exposing his neck. Mike moved forward and kissed him there, the stubble on his cheeks tickling Will’s skin.

Mike’s hand slid under his shirt while he worked his way up Will’s neck, along his jawline, his teeth grazing the skin there once, lightly, in a way that made Will shiver. Mike caressed his chest, thumb teasing the skin of his nipple until it was firm. Will turned his head to meet Mike’s lips.

“This okay?” Mike asked, breaking away for a moment.

“Yeah, this is nice,” Will replied, feeling a bit more confident. He ran his fingers through Mike’s hair, something he’d learned could always elicit a reaction. Mike hummed happily before covering Will’s lips with his own again, gently tweaking his nipple, and Will could feel his cock grow heavy with arousal.

Mike pulled away, kissing down Will’s neck again, pushing his shirt up so he could kiss his chest, down his abdomen. Will’s jaw clenched when he realized where Mike was headed.

“Can I?” Mike asked, his hands on Will’s belt. Will nodded rapidly. Mike unfastened and unzipped with a grin, pulling Will’s erection out of the slit at the front of his underwear. Mike gave him a squeeze before taking Will’s head in his mouth, tongue swirling, hot and wet in a way that Will could barely withstand.

“God, Mike,” Will whimpered. It was the third time Mike had gone down on him since this whole thing had started and each time he felt like he was going to explode the moment Mike took him in his mouth. Will gripped the steering wheel tightly with one hand, the other resting on Mike’s shoulder.

Mike pulled off for a moment. “You taste good,” he said softly, in this voice that made Will melt. Mike seemed to enjoy talking during sex,

but Will found he could barely string two words together. He settled for breathing heavily through his nose in response, staring intently into Mike's eyes, afraid he might say something stupid if he opened his mouth.

"You know, um, you can pull my hair a little, if you want to. While I'm down there," Mike said, suddenly almost shy. Will ran his hand up Mike's shoulder, his neck, and into the back of his unkempt mane, giving it a gentle tug that elicited a soft moan from Mike. "Yeah... Like that."

Mike took Will in his mouth once again, as Will continued to tangle his fingers in Mike's hair. The added sensation of Mike periodically moaning around his cock was more than Will could stand. He could feel his orgasm rapidly approaching.

"Mike," Will managed to choke out in warning. Mike hummed an acknowledgement, continuing to work Will's shaft with his tongue. Will let his head fall back, gripping Mike's hair tightly as he came. He could feel Mike swallow around him and he thought he might pass out.

Mike picked his head up and Will pulled them together into a crushing kiss. He reached down and felt Mike, hard and pushing against the confines of the fabric of his jeans.

Will clambered over the center console and into Mike's seat, hovering over him. Mike made a soft sound of surprise that turned into a breathy moan as Will pulled his cock out, stroking him rapidly while he kissed his way up his neck.

"I want you to come for me," Will whispered directly into Mike's ear, gently pulling his hair with his free hand. Mike swore and bucked his hips and as if on command, Will felt Mike's release coat his fingers. He continued to stroke him until Mike grabbed his wrist gently.

Will sat back on to Mike's lap, breathing hard. They looked at each other and laughed. Will tipped his head forward onto Mike's chest.

"You can blow me every time I give you a ride from now on," Will said through a smile, nuzzling his face against Mike. He laughed and

kissed the top of Will's head.

"Any time," Mike whispered into his hair.

That week Will was in high spirits looking toward Friday. On Wednesday afternoon he went and bought himself a nice coffee at the little cafe on campus and even worked up the nerve to flirt a little with the cute, obviously gay cashier. After his final class of the day he was feeling tired but content, walking across campus toward the dormitory.

When Will first spotted Mike across the quad he wasn't sure it was him. He'd had Mike on his mind a lot lately and sometimes he could be prone to seeing things that weren't there—wishful thinking. But as he got closer he could pick out the undeniable Wheeler traits: the height, the lankiness, the hair.

Will felt his heart rate pick up. Mike wasn't alone. On the other side of him stood a girl their age that he didn't recognize. Red hair cascaded over her shoulders, her head tipped to one side, listening intently to whatever Mike was saying. Will bit his lip.

The red-haired girl removed something from her bag—a notebook—and began to scribble with her pen. She ripped the sheet of paper from the spiral binding and pressed it against Mike's chest before pushing herself up to kiss him on the cheek.

The bottom dropped out of Will's stomach. He turned to walk in the other direction as quickly as possible, but a flood of students emerging from a lecture hall had blocked his path. He swore under his breath, turning to see a stunned Mike watching the girl depart before catching sight of Will.

Will swore again and turned on his heel, pretending he couldn't hear Mike calling after him. He walked as swiftly as he could without breaking out into a run, ignoring the way his nose burned and his eyes pricked, threatening tears any moment. His face felt ruddy and raw.

Without thinking he pushed his way into the library and slipped into the washroom, walked into the nearest stall, and sat down on the

toilet, pulling his legs to his chest so they would no longer be visible beneath the stall door. He sniffled, trying to hold back the hot tears brimming in his eyes.

*Stupid. So fucking stupid*, he thought. Stupid for starting this, stupid for letting it go on this long, stupid for being upset. Will wasn't the hookup type—he knew this. He knew this and yet he still let Mike... He sighed loudly, shaking his head, swiping away each tear as quickly as it came.

We aren't dating. We never said we were dating. He's straight. Straight. Just a straight guy who really likes sucking cock. Will snorted before putting his head in his hands.

This is ridiculous, he thought. Then: "this is ridiculous," he added aloud.

Outside his stall, the door to the washroom creaked open. "Will?" a voice called after him.

Will gritted his teeth together and endeavored to stay as silent and as still as possible.

He could hear Mike sigh. "Will?" he asked once more. He waited for several beats before slowly walking back out of the washroom. Will allowed himself to exhale.

He knew he would have to see Mike later whether he wanted to or not, but he just couldn't right now. He couldn't let him see him like this. Will's mom had instilled in him a healthy respect for embracing emotions, sure. He knew that it wasn't emasculating to cry or to be frightened or angry or sad.

At the end of the day he just wanted control. Control over his emotions, over the way he presented himself to the world. He was strong, he knew he was strong, but sometimes it felt like the "mask" he wore each day was, in fact, his weaker self. Why did he have to show the world his tenderness at all?

After waiting for as long as he could stand, Will finally emerged from the library bathroom. He walked back to the dorms in the failing

light, focusing on his breathing and trying not to rehearse what he was going to say if Mike was there.

When he turned his key in the lock he could hear shuffling inside. He steeled himself and pushed his way inside. Mike was standing there, awkwardly holding his hands over his abdomen.

“Hey,” he said softly.

“Hi,” Will muttered.

“Um,” Mike began, but Will pushed past him, behaving as though he needed to urgently put away his books and notes from class. “Can we... Can we talk?”

“What about?” Will asked lamely, sitting down on the edge of his bed.

“About earlier... What you saw, with me and Rachel.”

“Sure,” Will murmured, doing his best to look dispassionate.

“That wasn’t, um, what it looked like? I didn’t know—I didn’t know she was going to kiss me. I didn’t even know she liked me. We were talking about a class we have together, she said that she was going to give me her number so I could join her study group for the midterm exam, and...”

“Why are you telling me this?”

“I... What?”

“This isn’t... It’s not my business. You don’t have to tell me everything that happens to you.”

“Will...”

“Mike?”

Mike sighed. “So, you’re not upset?”

“Why would I be upset?”

"I don't know. Earlier it just seemed like you were. And then you disappeared. I didn't know what to think..."

Will just shrugged.

"Maybe we could..." Mike reached out tentatively to touch Will's hand and flinched when he pulled it away.

"Sorry, I just—I'm not in the mood tonight. Maybe tomorrow."

"Oh, okay. Yeah, that's... That's fine. I mean, you never have to—"

"I know, Mike."

The next few days passed slowly, awkwardly. Will felt increasingly sad and agitated and Mike seemed blasé about the whole thing. On Friday evening, however, Mike didn't go out. He lounged around the dorm room, trying to make conversation with Will, gently flirting.

He bought them pizza—delivery—and ordered Will's favorite toppings without even needing to ask. But Will couldn't bring himself to drop his shields. He was almost more angry with himself than with Mike. He still couldn't believe he'd let it go this far, and now he was wondering if there was even a way back.

Meanwhile, Mike was trying very hard to look attractive. Which was, somehow, infuriatingly even cuter. Will rolled his eyes at himself, glancing down at the textbook next to him and writing out another equation.

Will could tell Mike was growing frustrated with his own game, as he shifted positions multiple times on his mattress, until he was lying on his stomach, facing the foot of his bed. He maintained a pretense of working on something, lined paper before him and a pencil in one hand. He kept bringing the eraser end to his mouth, placing it between his lips as though deep in thought.

Will forged onward, finishing his Calculus homework and putting it aside. When he was done, he got to his feet and crossed the room, grabbing a towel and his shower caddy. He reached for the door and Mike piped up.



“Where are you going?” Mike’s attempt at a convincing disinterested expression was mostly unrealized.

Will held up the shower caddy as though it were evidence enough but added, “To shower,” aloud as well.

“Kay,” Mike murmured, rolling onto his back, propping his feet up on the headboard and abandoning any schoolwork he may or may not have been working on.

Will slipped out into the hallway, always slightly anxious about showering in the shared facilities, which were a Russian Roulette of moderate cleanliness or abject communal horror. Today they were blessedly nearer to the former than the latter. He pushed beyond the plastic curtain in one of the stalls, turning the water on and allowing it to heat up while he undressed.

He tensed when he heard the tell tale signs of another person entering the washroom and strolling into the shower area, their footsteps echoing flatly off the tile. They came to a halt in front of his stall, just beyond the curtain. Will recognized Mike’s shower shoes (enormous and neon pink), but still startled when he heard his voice.

“Hey, Will?”

Will sighed. “Yeah, Mike?”

“Uh, can I come in?” Will hesitated.

“Are all the other stalls taken or something?”

“Will,” Mike whined. “Come on.”

“Okay, fine,” Will huffed, grabbing his towel and wrapping it around his waist. Mike pulled back the curtain and slipped inside.

“Hey,” he said again, softly, keeping his voice low. He looked less cheeky than he had in the room, as though suddenly self-conscious, though he was still wearing only his loose fitting basketball shorts. “I wanted to apologize again, about what happened. I don’t know what I was thinking. I wasn’t trying to hurt you, I just—“

“Mike, it’s fine. Really. We’re just... It’s just fooling around, right?” The question hung heavy in the air for a few beats and Will felt the heat begin to rise on the back of his neck.

“I guess,” Mike said, his voice even softer. He reached out to touch his fingers to those on Will’s free hand. “Still. Can I... Can I make it up to you?”

Will swallowed, fighting to maintain some level of dignity, but he could feel it melting away, dissipating in the steam that was filling the small shower stall. “What’d you have in mind?”

Mike took one last step forward, closing the distance between them, and leaning down to kiss Will softly. There was a tenderness that he’d felt an undercurrent of in previous embraces that had been pushed to the forefront and suddenly everything felt so painfully intimate Will wanted to scream.

If Will possessed any level of self-preservation he would stop this—push Mike away and say they should just be friends or at least establish some kind of emotional boundaries if this was going to keep happening. But it was late and he was tired and as always, if Mike had affection on offer, Will was going to relish every last drop of it.

Mike reached up and took Will’s face in his hands, stroking his cheeks with his thumbs and gently tipping his head back. After a few moments, Will let go of his towel, bringing both hands up into Mike’s hair, which grew thicker and heavier as it filled with moisture from the steam surrounding them.

Mike pulled away for a second and whispered three small sorries, punctuating each one with a kiss. Will playfully nibbled his bottom lip after the third one and smiled up at him.

“It’s okay,” Will heard himself say. He wasn’t entirely sure of it, but they both had such a stringent aversion to the other’s pain that he could scarcely bear the idea of Mike, wandering around, heavy with the weight of it.

Will pushed himself up on to the balls of his feet and renewed the original embrace, sliding his arms around Mike’s shoulders and

pressing himself against him. He could feel some of the tension drain out of Mike's upper back, but his mind blanked as Mike's tongue slipped inside his mouth, sliding against his own.

Will moaned softly into the kiss as he felt Mike's hands slip down along his sides and come to rest on his hips. "Do you want to get in the shower?" Will murmured against Mike's mouth. Mike nodded.

Mike stepped back and the tension between them that had held Will's towel in place was released and it began to drop to the floor. Will caught it before it could, hanging it on a hook on the wall. Mike dropped his shorts and stepped out of his shower shoes.

Will felt a full body flush rising on his face, his neck, his chest. They'd never been completely naked together since all this began, and now he found he couldn't stop staring at every inch of Mike. He was so astonishingly, unfairly well put together. Long limbs, a sturdy torso, a full chest. A dark trail of soft, curly hair trailed from the center of his pectoral muscles to his groin that Will's fingers itched to trace from start to finish.

He could feel Mike's eyes on him as well, which filled his stomach with butterflies and his head with anxious reprisals about his physical appearance. He'd filled out since they were younger but he was still on the thin side. His body hair was blonde and light compared to Mike's.

Mike spoke first, shaking him out of his reverie. "You look..." His expression was curiously awestruck. "I mean, I kind of just want to kiss you all over. Is that—is that weird?"

"Thanks... I mean, um, no. It's not... Weird. I like it when you kiss me... Anywhere, really," he finished with an uncertain smile.

"Good," Mike said, grinning, his voice just above a whisper. Will reached out and took his hand, walking backwards into the shower.

The flush of warm water felt amazing. Mike's curls immediately began to fall in his eyes, and Will reached up and pushed them aside. Mike surged forward as he did, pressing their lips together in a playful kiss, fingers digging into Will's sides in a way that made him

want to giggle but it came out as a soft moan instead.

Mike trailed away from Will's lips, pressing kisses on his jawline, his neck, his shoulders. He stooped a bit, kissing each of Will's nipples and swirling his tongue around them until they were both hard and flushed. Mike slipped to his knees, gripping Will's hips and turning him so that his back was facing the shower head.

"This okay?" Mike asked, from his spot on the floor, kissing Will's abdomen in a way that made him shiver.

Will nodded and Mike smiled before running his tongue from Will's groin to the tip of his dick, taking his head in his mouth and hollowing his cheeks. Will set his jaw and bit his lip to keep from moaning too loudly as Mike began a slow but steady rhythm.

He glanced down every so often, unable to watch consistently for fear he'd last only a matter of minutes under Mike's attentions. He choked back a low sound when he noticed Mike stroking himself.

After a few minutes of relishing every sensation, the warm water on his back and the heat of Mike's mouth and tongue, he reached down and pushed Mike off, pulling him to his feet. He kissed him, roughly, and Mike responded enthusiastically, smiling against his mouth and pushing him back against the tiles.

"I really like you," Mike breathed out when Will pulled away.

"I really like you, too," Will said, breathless, ignoring the alarm bells going off in his mind. He reached down and took them both in his hand, stroking them together a few times.

"Fuck, Will," Mike choked out. "That feels amazing..." he murmured, before covering Will's mouth with his own again. Will took his other hand from behind Mike's back and wrapped them both around their cocks, hot and flush against one another. He stroked them both steadily, gripping them tightly. Mike came first, biting Will's lip and thrusting into his hand. The friction and the heat and Mike throbbing against him pushed Will over the edge moments later.

Mike kept kissing him, even after the urgency slipped away. It was

languid and sweet and meandering intimacy that made Will want to stay wrapped up in Mike's arms for the rest of eternity.

"We're going to use up every drop of hot water in the residence," Will murmured, amused, when Mike pulled away to kiss his neck. He laughed when Mike grazed his teeth along his skin then gasped softly when Mike dug his fingers into his hips.

"You're gonna make me hard again," Will said, shyly, closing his eyes and tipping his head back against the tiles.

Mike pulled back and smiled affectionately at him, pushing his hair away from his forehead. "I don't mind if you don't."

Will laughed weakly and pushed him away, grabbing a bar of soap and lathering it against Mike's chest. They cleaned each other in contented silence, switching off the tap and shivering when they did at the sudden loss of the warm water and the warmth of each other's bodies.

Back in the room Mike didn't dress right away, reclining on his bed and reading, not bothering to hide his lingering arousal until Will could no longer ignore it and called him over to his bed. Mike finished what he'd started earlier, going down on Will while he stroked himself until they both came, shuddering and moaning and oversensitive from the long, hot shower.

They fell asleep naked, wrapped up in each other's arms. Will knew in his heart he shouldn't let Mike spend the night in his bed like this, all tangled limbs and soft, warm kisses. But it had been a long week, a long semester, a long time since Will had felt this level of closeness and he just couldn't bring himself to push it away.

That week everything felt softer, as if the entire world had been pulled from focus. Will struggled to focus in class—the voices of professors and fellow students sounded muffled and distant. But everything with Mike was in sharp relief, sounds crisp and full like the needle dropping onto an album and crackling to life.

On Friday evening, Mike was absent from the dorm room when Will returned. This wasn't out of the ordinary, but when he returned

around dinner time Will was surprised.

“Hey,” Mike said, a smile in voice. His expression bordered on mischievous, and Will appraised him carefully.

“Hey. You’re back early. Or... Going back out?”

Mike shook his head. “No, I’ve actually got something, uh, for us to try?”

Will blinked, his heart rate kicking up. “Uh...”

“Nothing weird!” Mike amended, quickly. “Just something fun. You don’t have to try it if you don’t want to, but...” He dipped his hand into his pocket and produced a small plastic bag containing a few pre-rolled joints.

“Oh,” Will let out, genuinely surprised. He laughed, slightly relieved. “I don’t know what I thought was going to be in your pocket...”

Mike raised his eyebrows and smiled playfully this time. “What did you think it was going to be?”

Will shook his head and shrugged. A card game, a novelty candy, condoms? It really could have been anything with Mike. Will brought his hand to his mouth and pressed the tip of his thumb between his lips thoughtfully—the only thing that kept him from biting his nails.

“We don’t have to smoke them, if you don’t want to,” Mike reassured him. “I just thought it could be... Fun.”

Will waved Mike over to where he was sitting in bed, pulling him down and giving him a quick kiss.

“I was thinking maybe we could go to Dunn’s Woods, walk around...” He gave Will a more lingering kiss. “Smoke, if we want. Then come back here.”

“Sounds nice,” Will whispered, before Mike leaned down again, kissing him more firmly.

Mike hooked his fingers into Will’s jean pocket and tugged, causing

his elbows to slip out from underneath him. With Will now on his back, Mike dropped down to hover over him, pressing their lips together, mouths open, before pulling back. “Get your coat,” he whispered, before getting back on his feet.

Will groaned softly before sitting up, chucking a pillow at Mike, who dodged and laughed.

Although it was in the heart of campus, Dunn’s Woods was quiet. Truly, deeply silent—like the wooded areas Will had frequented as a child back in Hawkins. Once they’d passed into the relative darkness of the trail, Will reached out to link fingers with Mike without even thinking. Mike took his hand quickly and easily, giving him a little squeeze.

When they had reached the center of the wood, Mike pulled out one of the small joints and lit it, inhaling deeply before handing it over to Will. He hesitated for a moment before taking a drag, the cherry glowing brightly in the near-dark of the woods.

When the joint was cashed they spent a few moments staring at one another, giggling periodically. Will’s mind felt fuzzy, but every brush of Mike’s fingers against his own pierced the static, like a little electric shock.

As they meandered through the woods, slowly making their way back home, Mike suggested a detour.

“There’s something I want to show you, near the library.”

Will just nodded along, smiling up at the night sky, Mike leading them.

The library loomed large in the darkness, its irregular limestone panels casting strange shadows. As they passed into a softly lit space below, Mike glanced back at Will and smiled playfully. Will continued to follow him, winding around the lower section of the library. Will reached out and touched the wall as he turned the corner, the stones were cool and rough and uneven beneath his fingertips.

Just when he was about to break the silence and ask Mike where, exactly, they were headed, he stopped short. Will ran into his back with a soft sound. Mike laughed as he turned around. "Sorry," he murmured, looking down at Will. "Didn't realize how close you were."

"S'okay," Will whispered. Mike leaned against the wall with one hand at Will's side, making the narrow space feel even smaller.

"I really want to kiss you," Mike whispered, looking down at him with a hazy sort of expression.

"I don't know if that's a good idea," Will heard himself say.

"Why not?" Mike asked, touching Will's cheek with his free hand.

"Didn't we say, you know... Just in the dorms, right?" Mike sighed. He was close enough that Will could feel the air pass over his face.

Mike stared at him thoughtfully for a few beats. "Please," he added. Will tensed. He could feel his resolve waning as Mike reached down and took his hand, running his thumb across his knuckles.

"Maybe just a little bit," Will offered, tipping his head up.

"A little bit?" Mike asked with a smile.

"Just a little bit," Will repeated, the corners of his lips quirking upward.

Mike leaned forward and captured his lips in his own. It was a soft, chaste kiss. When he began to pull away Will instinctively reached out and cinched the fabric of Mike's shirt in his fingers and pulled him closer.

Mike held back a small sound of surprise, smiling into the kiss. He leaned forward, running his free hand down Will's back to his hips, still bracing himself against the wall. Will's resolve to stick to the "rules" had all but disappeared, lost in the swirling heat that had taken over his mind.

Will reached up and wrapped his arms around Mike's neck. He let his



weight hang there, suddenly wishing he could climb into Mike's arms and ask him to carry him home. Mike slid his right hand off of the stone wall and matched the position of his left on Will's hips. He pressed Will back against the wall, sliding his hands down to Will's ass and squeezing experimentally.

"Mike," Will whimpered. He knew their 'little bit' of kissing was escalating quickly, but whatever good sense he possessed that had not yet been obscured by smoke was no match for Mike's intoxicating presence.

A brief flash of desire passed through his mind: the image of Mike flipping him over, pulling down his jeans, and fucking him against the stone wall of the library. He shuddered. He wasn't sure either of them were ready for that, but he did want to be closer—impossibly close to Mike.

Will pushed off of the wall, pulled himself up using Mike's shoulders, and wrapped his legs around Mike's waist. Mike smiled into their kiss, his hands sliding under Will's thighs to hold him up. Will could feel Mike's erection through his jeans.

"I want you to fuck me like this," Will breathed out, surprising himself. Weed had clearly dissolved his filter. Mike's fingers dug into his thighs, almost painfully.

"God, Will," Mike moaned into his neck. "I want that too."

Will squirmed before releasing his grip on Mike's waist and sliding back to the ground. Mike looked at him questioningly before Will pushed himself up and kissed him firmly on the lips, turning around in the small space and leaning against the wall.

Mike seemed to catch on, pressing himself up against Will's back. A soft moan ripped out of him as he felt Mike, hard against his lower back. Mike placed one hand on his hip, and brought the other around to the crotch of his pants, squeezing him playfully before unfastening his button and unzipping his fly.

"You're leaking already," Mike said directly into his ear, a smile in his voice as he ran his thumb across the moisture on the head of

Will's cock. Will pushed back against him playfully with a soft laugh. Mike sucked in air through his nose at the sensation.

Mike began to stroke him, other hand still firmly planted on Will's hip, kissing his neck. Will moaned and panted and thought about what it would feel like to have Mike inside him. He felt Mike twitch and grind against him and imagined he was thinking about the same.

Mike picked up the pace, gripping him tightly. Will could hear himself making all sorts of undignified sounds, squirming and moaning and rutting against Mike, but he found he didn't feel embarrassed. It helped that Mike was seemingly equally entranced.

Will leaned his forehead against the cool stone wall, reaching back and covering Mike's hand on his hip with his own. He could feel his legs quaking. A wave of heat surged through Will and he turned his head to the side, Mike kissing him sloppily as he shuddered and came, his legs trembling beneath him. Their tongues slid together as Mike continued to stroke Will until the last few drops of come had fallen to the concrete below them.

Will shifted in Mike's embrace, disentangling their hands and pushing himself back into his boxers and zipping up his jeans. He reached down and quickly unfastened Mike's belt, unbuttoning and unzipping his fly and freeing his cock, which was flush and white hot to the touch. Mike swallowed and glanced around briefly, his expression was a confusing combination of fierce arousal and nervous energy.

"D-Do you think we should head back to the dorm or—ahh—I mean what if someone—Jesus, Will," Mike seemed to struggle to form a coherent thought as Will stroked him.

Will kissed him firmly before running his hands down Mike's body as he knelt to the ground. Mike's eyes grew wide and his breath came even more quickly than before.

"Will... Fuck." Mike sounded like he might cry. "If you do that I'm gonna come in like two seconds."

"So we'll get back to the dorms faster, then?" Will asked, smiling as he kissed the tip of Mike's cock playfully. Mike laughed nervously, a

sound that was cut short by a breathy moan as Will took him partially into his mouth, swirling his tongue around the shaft experimentally.

Will took a deep breath, appreciating the unique musk of Mike, something he'd only previously noted on his fingertips after an encounter. There was a faint acidity in his taste, as well, and the salt of sweat. Above him Mike was trembling and clearly struggling to keep from thrusting into his mouth, hands braced against the stone wall behind them.

Will gripped Mike tightly with one hand, stroking the portion of his shaft he couldn't manage to fit into his mouth. After a few moments of just tasting and appreciating the strange sensation of Mike twitching on his tongue, Will began a more rhythmic bobbing of his head. Mike reacted immediately, whispering a string of curse words with his name intermingled among them.

"So—so good, Will, I'm—I can't keep—I'm going to come, I'm going to come if you keep—"

He could feel Mike's cock grow harder still and moments later his mouth flooded with warm release, more than he could keep inside. He pulled off, spitting Mike's come onto the ground, not far from his own, stroking him through the rest of his orgasm, running his lips along the side of his shaft.

Mike was panting heavily, his face resting against his forearm, still braced against the stone wall, twitching and gasping occasionally in the aftershocks of his climax. One of his hands had come to rest on the side of Will's neck, and he was stroking him gently there. Will slowly, unsteadily got to his feet, sliding up between Mike and the wall. Before he could say anything Mike kissed him desperately, tongue slipping into his mouth.

When he pulled away Mike let out a little huff of laughter, tipping his head against the wall and looking down at Will with an exhausted smile.

"I don't think I've ever come that hard in my life," Mike breathed, tucking his still half erect cock back into his pants. Will felt a gentle

heat rise in his face, and he tipped his head back and gave Mike a quick kiss.

"You're not so bad yourself," Will replied with a small smile.

"Were you... Did you mean it, that stuff you said about, you know." Mike looked nervous on the surface, but it was masking something else. Will nodded and Mike's neck flushed a deep crimson.

"Is that something you'd want to do, with me?"

"God, yes," Mike said quickly, the instant Will had finished speaking. They looked at each other for a few beats, the muscles moving in Mike's jaw. He leaned forward and kissed Will, softly at first, then more deeply, pressing him back against the wall.

"I want you so much, Will," Mike whispered, directly into his ear. "You have no idea." Will shivered and buried his face into Mike's chest.

On the walk back to the dorms, they held hands, pressing their shoulders together against the blustery cold wind. Mike unlinked their fingers when they approached the pool of light just outside the building's entrance and Will suppressed a small sigh.

The next week limped by, the days growing shorter, the nights growing longer, and the air turning crisp. Once, Will ran into Mike at the library and he waved him over to where he was seating, pressing their thighs together while they both read.

Upon leaving they walked together past the recessed area they'd ventured into the weekend prior, watching the occasional student push through the glass doors that led to the underground study corrals.

"We'll have to come back here some time, try out your idea," Mike said, giving him a gentle nudge with his shoulder. Will laughed nervously, ignoring the way Mike's words had gone directly to his groin.

Later that evening, Will lie awake, unable to stop his mind from churning. He shifted several times in bed, struggling to settle.

“Can’t sleep?” Mike’s voice was gentle and seemed far away. Will shook his head.

“Come over here?” Will asked, still a little anxious when it came to initiating things, especially on a week night, outside the seemingly magical realm of the weekend.

But Mike slipped out of bed without hesitation, crossing the room and sliding into bed next to Will.

“This okay?” Mike nodded.

“I like your bed better, anyway.” Will just rolled his eyes and smiled.

Mike leaned forward and kissed him, slow and soft. His left hand wandered down Will’s side, sliding under his shirt and caressing the soft skin of his abdomen. Will reached out and did the same, running his fingers across Mike’s bare chest, rubbing his thumb across each nipple until it was full and erect.

Will slid closer to him, until their bodies were pressed flush against each other. They continued to kiss, Mike stroking his back with his free hand, Will sliding his fingers through Mike’s hair and gently massaging his scalp.

Mike sighed contentedly, “I like this. I like, um, being this close to you. It’s nice,” he whispered, though no one could hear them.

“I like it, too,” Will murmured, pressing a kiss to the corner of Mike’s mouth.

“Sometimes, I feel like, I sleep better when I’m with you? I don’t know if that’s weird,” Mike said, trailing off with a nervous little laugh.

“No, I... I feel that way too.”

Mike kissed him and Will tipped his head back. “Maybe we should always sleep together like this,” Mike said after pulling away from Will’s lips and pressing their cheeks together, his mouth hovering near Will’s ear.

Will closed his eyes and in a flash envisioned a life with Mike in a perfect little apartment, sleeping tangled up in each other's arms every night, washing dishes together, drinking coffee from a little French press. He tried to push it away, but it just made his heart ache more. Instead, he deflected.

"We'd just end up fooling around all the time," he said with a little forced laugh.

"Maybe," Mike wondered aloud, clearly lost in thought as he pushed a few stray hairs behind Will's ear, Mike's calloused fingertips on his soft skin making him shiver.

"Isn't that what we're doing right now?" Will asked with a small but genuine smile. Mike grinned back at him, running his hand down Will's back and squeezing his ass.

"I don't know, are we?" Mike asked, and Will started to laugh but it turned into a moan when Mike's fingers slipped between his cheeks, teasing.

"Mike," Will warned, although it was a caution probably better leveled to himself.

"I know," Mike said quickly, giving him a little kiss.

"I mean, I want to, I'm just... Not ready yet."

"That's okay, really. I want you to be ready. I want it to be perfect."

That last little bit—I *want it to be perfect*—shot through Will, making his entire midsection throb. He bit his lip. "If I was ready, how would you, um, what would you do to make it perfect?"

Mike smiled, his eyes catching the light and shining in the dimly lit room. "Well, I'd use my tongue to start. Then, when you were ready, my fingers, while I blow you. Then when you couldn't wait any longer, when you needed more, I'd push inside you. I'd go slow, give you lots of time to adjust to me. Then, I'd start moving, in and out, while I stroke you. I want to make you come while I'm inside you."

"I want you to come inside me," Will blurted out, thankful that Mike

couldn't see his flushed face in the dark.

"Fuck—God, yes, I want that, too, Will."

"The other night, near the library... I was thinking about you inside me," Will said softly, entranced by Mike's unabashed willingness to say exactly what he wanted.

"Me too. From the second you said—when you said you wanted me to fuck you... I couldn't stop thinking about it."

Will pushed himself up and kissed Mike with renewed urgency, pressing their hips together, grinding their erections against one another. He pressed on Mike's shoulder, guiding him onto his back as Will shifted his position and straddled him. He adjusted until he could feel Mike's cock against his backside.

"I want you so much," Mike choked out when Will reached around behind himself to caress the sensitive underside of Mike's head with his fingertips. Mike's hands twitched where they were on Will's hips, moving back to grip his ass, spreading him open.

Will's mind was churning, completely saturated with conflicting desires. He knew he wanted Mike, but he hadn't prepared. Not physically, and certainly not mentally. The intimacy of letting Mike fuck him felt like a step that went well beyond their 'casual' arrangement thus far.

While Will was still trying to decide what to do, he felt Mike shift beneath him, pulling him to one side, flipping him onto his back in one fluid motion. Mike was hovering over Will now, between his legs, his cock tantalizingly close to his entrance. Without much thought Will reached down and took Mike's erection in his hand and pressed the head against himself. Mike let out a strangled sort of whimper.

"I think we should wait," Mike breathed out. "I know we both... It's hard to make a decision like this. When we're both so..."

"Yeah." Will felt a mixture of relief and disappointment.

"But there's something else we could do," Mike amended, shifting forward so their cocks bumped together, making Will twitch. He

leaned over the side of the bed and grabbed a little bottle of oil, sitting up so he could pour a bit into his palm and stroke them both.

Mike leaned forward and kissed Will softly as he started a gentle rhythm, moving against him. The sensation of their cocks sliding together, the heat and the smoothness of the oil felt amazing. Will slipped his hand between them, gripping them more tightly against one another.

Mike began to pick up the pace, thrusting against Will, alternating between kissing him and looking into his eyes. Part of Will wanted to turn away or close his eyes, but something about the connection was irresistible. He could feel his impending orgasm building rapidly, like a coil compressing inside him.

“I wanna come together,” Mike said breathlessly.

“Me too. I’m—I’m really close.”

“Yeah, s-so am I.” Mike’s whole body was trembling as he endeavored to keep up the pace, their cocks sliding together in Will’s hand. He leaned down and kissed Will, his mouth open, his tongue slipping inside.

“Mike—“ Will choked out, breaking their kiss, tipping his forehead against Mike’s. He thrust upward into his own hand, pushing against Mike’s cock as he shot rope after rope of come onto his abdomen, moaning with each throb.

“Fuck, Will,” Mike let out a low sound as he pushed down against the hollow of Will’s hip, thrusting and coating Will’s stomach further with his release.

Mike collapsed onto him, despite the mess between them, breathing heavily while pressing kisses to Will’s neck and cheeks.

“God,” Will murmured, putting his hand to his forehead. His face felt flushed and raw. “That was... Yeah.”

Mike laughed, a gentle and somewhat exhausted sound. He nuzzled against Will’s neck, prompting Will to reach up with his free hand and slowly stroke his back. After a few moments of lying still their



breathing began to slow and return to normal. Will felt the overwhelming pull of sleep, dragging him down like undertow.

“We should probably shower,” Mike said into the skin of Will’s neck. “I’m pretty sure if we don’t move soon we’ll be glued together forever.”

“Probably. Probably should have put a towel down or something, too. The sheets are... Not great.” They both laughed and Mike pushed up off of him, shakily getting to his knees.

“We can sleep in my bed tonight,” Mike offered, stepping onto the floor and offering Will his hand and linking their fingers together when he accepted.

After doing their best to subtly shower together, they wandered back to the room and settled into Mike’s bed. He lie on his back, pulling Will onto his chest, so he could easily stroke his hair. The rhythmic motion and the gentle breathing of Mike lulled him further and further until Will drifted out of consciousness.

In the days that followed, Mike seemed different. He watched Will with a look that said: this is mine. He broadcast that message fairly freely, even going so far as to step between Will and the boy at the coffee shop with the sandy blonde hair.

“I’ve got this one,” Mike piped up, pushing a \$10 bill onto the counter before Will could react. He thanked Mike, but felt a little hurt when the cashier acquiesced so quickly to him, his expression changing, as though Will had disappeared from his line of sight.

By the end of the week, Will had become frustrated. He cared deeply about Mike and he was certainly getting his fair share of pleasure out of their after hours arrangement, but he knew in his heart that it wasn’t ever going to be enough. He needed options, real options. If they were keeping things casual, it had to go both ways.

He had planned to confront Mike about it on Friday evening, but when he got home from his last class of the day the room was empty. He waited, patiently at first, then growing increasingly annoyed as the hour grew later. When at last he heard Mike’s keys, fumbling

with the lock, he hopped to his feet and pre-empted him, opening the door.

“Oh, hey,” Mike said, lighting up. He smelled faintly of beer and cigarettes, but his eyes were clearer than some nights. Mike leaned forward to give him a quick kiss, but Will pulled back. Mike’s eyebrows knitted together. “You okay?”

“I want to talk about something.”

Mike’s face fell further. “Oh, okay. Did I... Did I do something wrong, or—“

“I need you to... I mean, I know we’re just fooling around here.”

Mike sighed. “I mean, I guess.”

“But I need to be able to... It’s not easy for someone like me to find someone. And I can’t let you get in the way of that.”

“What do you mean?” Mike asked, his eyes suddenly glassy.

“I mean I... I need to be looking for someone who I can really be with. Someone who wants to date me, to love me.”

“I love you, Will,” Mike protested. Will’s heart leapt but he dismissed it, forging onward.

“Not the way I need you to.”

“What—what way do you need? I can—“

“I need to find someone who wants to be my boyfriend, Mike, not just my... I don’t know. My secret sex friend.”

“You’re the one who wanted it to be a secret,” Mike said pitifully.

“What? You—“

“You made the rules. About the dorms.”

Will sighed. “You agreed to them?”

“But, everything that’s happened... I mean, the other night...”

“It’s just sex, Mike, it’s not a relationship. I don’t know how else to say it. I need something real.”

“Fuck.” Mike put his hands in his hair, a few stray tears trickling down his cheeks. “I don’t want you dating anybody else.”

Will shook his head, fighting the tears stinging in the corners of his own eyes. “This is not your decision, you drunk asshole.”

“I haven’t... I’m not drunk. I haven’t been drunk at all the last few times, you know this! I was just... I was just afraid to say it.”

Will swallowed, anxious. “To say what, Mike?”

“That, um. That I want to be with you.”

“What do you mean?” Will asked, terrified he would misread something in Mike’s words.

“I mean I want you to be with me. Just me. All the time, not just in here. Like—”

“Your boyfriend?”

Mike shrugged. “Calling someone I love ‘girlfriend’ or ‘boyfriend’ makes me feel like I’m twelve.”

“Someone you—someone you love?”

They were both silent for a few beats. Will stared at his feet, but he could feel Mike’s eyes on him.

“Yeah. You are... I love you, Will. Like I said. I mean, I’ve always loved you, but not like this? It’s hard to explain. It’s like opening a door you always knew was there and finding something completely different on the other side.”

Will swallowed, hard. He put his hands in his hair and gave in to the tears that had been brimming in his eyes.

"This is... a lot," Will said, his voice hoarse with emotion. Mike nodded, and sniffed.

"I know. I know. This whole thing... I've been fucking it up since I started. I didn't—I should have just been honest with you. When you first told me that you liked guys I guess I just couldn't stop thinking about it." Mike scratched the back of his neck, staring intently at the floor. "I mean, you're my best friend. And I just thought... What would it be like if we were together, you know?"

Will wiped his eyes and took a deep breath, opening his arms weakly. Mike reacted immediately, opening his own arms to catch Will and pull him close. They fell backwards together on this bed, Mike holding Will in place on his chest.

"You weren't scared?" Will asked after a few minutes of silence.

"Scared?"

"That... That something would go wrong?"

"I guess I was a little," Mike said softly. "But I had to know. I had to know." He ran his fingers through Will's hair gently.

"What do we do now?" Will asked in a small voice. Mike hummed thoughtfully.

"Cuddle, I think." Will laughed. "If you want to," Mike amended, giving him a little squeeze.

"Yeah, I would like that." They stayed in that position for a few more minutes, Will resting on Mike's chest, halfway on and halfway off the bed. After a while, Will stood up and they both changed into their sleep clothes.

Will turned to Mike to ask whose bed he preferred to see him lying down and holding his arms wide. He grinned and slipped under the covers and into Mike's arms. Will sighed happily as Mike nuzzled his face into his hair.

In the final moments before he fell asleep, Will thought of many things. Pictures flashed through his mind. His childhood self, drawing

in crayon. The way his mom ruffled his hair in the mornings at the breakfast table. The little smile he and Mike would sometimes share during a Dungeons & Dragons campaign.

It was hard to imagine this constellation of memories could be plotted to where they were now, wrapped up together like something that had no beginning or end. Maybe there was no other way things could have been—maybe there were millions. Maybe all paths lead to this place, maybe there was only one mountain. Will linked his fingers with Mike's and sighed, his eyes fluttering shut.